

Ödön Lechner in Context

Studies of the international conference on the occasion
of the 100th anniversary of Ödön Lechner's death

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of the 100th anniversary of Ödön Lechner's death

Edited by Zsombor Jékely
with the assistance of Zsuzsa Margittai and
Klára Szegzárdy-Csengery

Museum of Applied Arts
Budapest, 2015

The conference was jointly organized by the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest and the Institute of Art History,
Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Organising committee of the conference:

Tamás Csáki, András Hadik, Zsombor Jékely, Katalin Keserü, Magda Lichner, József Sisa

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Preface

The Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest is housed in a magnificent building, the masterwork of architect Ödön Lechner (1845–1914). This great building defines and identifies the institution, and is sometimes better known than the collection it houses. In fact, the building is often described as the first and key object in the collection of the museum. It is thus no wonder that one of the missions of the Museum of Applied Arts is to make the architect of its palace better known both at home and abroad. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Ödön Lechner, the museum thus embarked on the organization of an international conference and a major exhibition dedicated to the master.

The exhibition and the accompanying publication – written and edited by József Sisa – set out to survey the career and works of Ödön Lechner, displaying plans and photos of his most important buildings. Special attention was given to five major works, nominated for UNESCO World Heritage Site status: the Kecskemét City Hall, the parish church of Budapest-Kőbánya, the Museum of Applied Arts, the Institute of Geology, and the Postal Savings Bank. The aim of the conference on the other hand was broader: to place Lechner's architectural principles and planning activity on the contemporary European scale, with the opportunity for comparisons on a wide horizon, while also giving an opportunity for presenting the results of most recent research. The conference explored the context in which Ödön Lechner

had worked and created his masterpieces: Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of great scientific and architectural change and development. Hungary in particular, after the 1867 compromise with the Austrian empire of the Habsburgs, enjoyed unprecedented growth during these decades. Ödön Lechner, one of the greatest and most original architects of this period, certainly deserves a prominent place among the international talents from the late nineteenth century.

The conference was jointly organized by the Museum of Applied Arts and by the Art History Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and by an organizing committee set up to coordinate the programme and the various sections. Altogether, four sessions were organized, focusing on the role and architecture of European museums of decorative arts, on issues of orientalism in late-nineteenth-century architecture, on questions of architecture and technology, as well as on significant figures of European architecture, the contemporaries of Lechner. The detailed description and programme of each section can be read below. We are very grateful for all participants who came to Budapest to deliver their papers and to those especially who had submitted an edited version for publication. The present volume is the result of their combined effort, which represents a significant step towards understanding the phenomenon of Ödön Lechner in the context of the late nineteenth century.

PHOTOS OF THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE CONFERENCE
AND THE EXHIBITION
LECHNER, A CREATIVE GENIUS











Overview of the conference and introductions to the sections

Lechner – International conference on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Ödön Lechner's death

Conference date and venue:

19–21 November 2014, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest

Organisers:

Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest

Institute of Art History, Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Organising Committee:

Tamás Csáki, art historian, Budapest City Archives

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Magda Lichner, art historian, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest

József Sisa, Director, Institute of Art History, Research Centre for the Humanities,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Overview

In 2014 we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the death of Ödön Lechner (1845–1914), one of the greatest Hungarian architects and one of the most original geniuses of the European architectural scene at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This special occasion was marked with a three-day-long international conference (19–21 November 2014).

The centennial of Ödön Lechner's death (1845–1914) gave the primary occasion for an international conference devoted to the architect's oeuvre. Furthermore, in the history of the Museum of Applied Arts a highly significant event also makes it relevant to present the latest researches. The building of this museum designed by Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos architects' studio is nominated to be a World Heritage Site and because of its condition, the complex reconstruction and expansion cannot be further delayed. The reconstruction is also combined with the modernisation of the institute. The examination of the historical monument, the restorers' and art historians' reports on the architect's plans as well as the studies for preparing the needed documentations have come up with several new and often surprising results. These inspired to rethink Lechner's manifested principles and his architecture.

The museum's Archive preserves the documentation of the construction between 1892 and 1898, the original plans, the reports of the architectural committee's sittings, the construction diary, work reports, bills and not least the files and correspondence of the governmental patronage. Besides the manuscripts and plans, the uniquely rich source material consists of archive photos and negatives with the help of which the examination was comprehensible and the future reconstruction can be authentic. Lechner's work previously was said to be eclectic because he used typical elements for different periods in art history, but the proper classification is rather syncretic – combining living parallel forms and equalised principle theories. Emphasizing the usage of sculpted decoration and sheet ornamentation many consider him an early representative of Hungarian Art Nouveau. Recently the characteristics of national Romanticism have been emphasized: he intended to develop a characteristically Hungarian architectural style.

The modernisation of the institution is of course based on researches on the phenomena of musealisation which has been a central theme in art historical studies in the last decades and has become a paradigm. The building of the Museum of Applied Arts as emblematic manifestation of Ödön Lechner's conceptions is an outstanding work even from this point of view. During the preparation works for the reconstruction viewpoints that were previously considered to be less important have been re-evaluated. In Lechner's designer practise the engineering architecture, the latest iron structures of his age, the usage of brick and concrete played a significant role. With the usage of the new materials and structures he typified the building but also made it unique. In this style characteristic to him, Lechner harmonically combined the influences that affected him, the experiences gained in Berlin, Rome, Paris and London and the patriot wishes: the dominant oriental tradition which feature is highly emphasized in the nineteenth-century-image about the origin of the Hungarians. His qualifications, the recognition of the contemporary European and Hungarian phenomena, his openness to the latest architectural trends as well as the artistic and theoretical publicity of his age made it possible – according to his intention – to develop a new style and create a 'school' from his followers and disciples. In framing the sections of the conference these viewpoints have been considered.

The aim and the role of the conference is to place Lechner's architectural principles and designing activity on the contemporary European scale, with the opportunity for comparisons on a wide horizon, while also giving an opportunity for presenting the results of most recent research. The organising committee has set up four sections for discussing these topics in detail.

Introductions to the sections of the conference

Section 1.

Applied arts – Museums of applied arts

Chair: József Sisa

This section tackled several related issues. One is the birth of the concept of applied arts, the appreciation of material culture, the changing perception of the aesthetic value of everyday objects surrounding us, with special

respect to the division of handicraft and industry. Further attention was paid to the role of shows, world's fairs and various publications (books, journals). To that comes the appearance of permanent exhibitions, later museums devoted exclusively to the applied arts, their foundation and institutional background, national significance, and their relationship to other, traditional museums focusing on history and the arts. In this section we examined the above aspects in a general context, and also with special respect to specific, major European museums of applied arts. In the case of the latter, the process of their institutionalisation, their collecting policies as well as their construction and functioning was discussed. The Museum of Applied Arts of Budapest, Lechner's chef-d'oeuvre, can be better understood against this broader background.

Section 2.

Orientalism and ornament

Chair: Katalin Keserü

The nineteenth-century orientalism – a sensational interest for the culture of the Near-, Middle- and Far-East – grew out from several roots and, we can say, had several branches. One root was the English architects' attention for the Mogul (Mughal) monuments on the Indian colonies. Another was the spectacle of the archaeological and cultural possessions brought to European, principally to English, German, French and Russian, museums as a by-product of the attempt for dominating the Middle-Eastern, Islam-Arabic region and the Iranian plateau. Furthermore, the synagogues on the Pyrenean-peninsula recalling the Moorish architecture could serve as another example. The goods and the knowledge about Eastern objects presented at the universal expositions in the second half of the century served as a model for the general interest and taste and presumably these exhibitions were reasons for the high popularity. The scientists and amateur researchers of Central Europe also turned towards the East, although for different reasons. The national mythical history like Romantic legends about the origin of a nation emerged for instance in resurrecting the 'Sarmatism' in Poland while in other countries of Central, Eastern, or Southern Europe joining the Pan-Slavic idea and the Byzantine traditions. With simplifying the hypothetical studies of

ethnic origin in Hungary, the Iranian and Turanian (general name for the nomadic tribes migrating east from the neighbouring Iranian mountains) relationship received special attention in the popular historical narrative. In these countries, representing the 'national character' received special meaning and was mainly manifested in the ornamentation. The science which turned towards the object culture after language research and the archaeological debate about the Great Migration Period were connected to the discourse of 'Orient or Rome' theme. This section examines and illustrates these phenomena with ornamental examples.

Section 3.

Architecture, architecture as art, engineering architecture

Chair: András Hadik

The list of these notions, on the one hand, reflects a chronological order, but it also refers to different approaches. The questions of practical craft, creative art and theoretical planning closely relate to the changes of nineteenth-century education and also to the publicity of the opinions about art. After acquiring the basic principles in the Hungarian capital, Lechner received architectural style doctrine, planning and engineering studies in Berlin. Later during his travels in Italy and the years spent in Paris he broadened his knowledge. In the Romantic conception architecture acquired the "aura" of the Fine Arts; therefore the architects were entitled to artistic consciousness. This section deals with the connections between the qualifications and the status of the architects, and, on the other hand, with the relations and genres of how the demanded architectural tasks of the nineteenth century were executed: industrial buildings, bridges, railway stations, market halls, world fair halls and with the creators of functional and emblematic buildings.

Section 4.

Ödön Lechner – ‘Father figure’ of the modern Hungarian architecture. Followers, criticism and reception of Lechner in the first half of the twentieth century

Chair: Tamás Csáki

Ödön Lechner was the first personality in Hungarian architectural history who had a ‘school’ and ‘followers’ – and there were not many even later. In the first decades of the twentieth century even without university chair, official position and institutional position he became a point of reference for a significant group in the generation following him. Among the closest circle of Lechner were outstanding representatives of the Hungarian Art Nouveau architecture like Marcell Komor, József Vágó, Béla Lajta or Béla Málnai.

Lechner’s works and personality divided Hungarian architectural society, the most important debates in architectural press formulated around him in the first years of the twentieth century. He received strong criticism not only from the conservative and academic architects of the University of Technology, but for instance, the neo-vernacular movement around 1908 (the ‘Youngsters’), which differentiated itself from the architectural Art Nouveau, defined itself against Lechner

and his followers. From the 1910s, all criticism against architectural Art Nouveau articulated either from the conservative or the modern stream principally took aim at his followers’ architecture. Their ornamental modernism became the scapegoat to which all the ‘aberrations’ of the early years of the twentieth century were stuck to.

In this section of the Lechner conference, we asked speakers to present architects who played a central role in their countries’ architectural culture in the early years of the twentieth century. As well as examining Lechner’s personality and role we would like to present different ‘father-figures’ in twentieth-century architecture through the example of Otto Wagner, Henrik Petrus Berlage and Jan Kotěra. We wanted to know what role these architects played in their architectural community and what their relation with the Academy, the official authorities, educational institutions and the government was like. Was a school set up around them, how did that work, did they succeed in establishing their own alternative institutions and organs and what was their relationship with the architects of the generation following them like? Who were their commissioners and how did this influence their status in the profession?

The Role of the Berlin Bauakademie in the Training of Ödön Lechner and Other Hungarian Architects, and the Limitations and Opportunities of Historicism

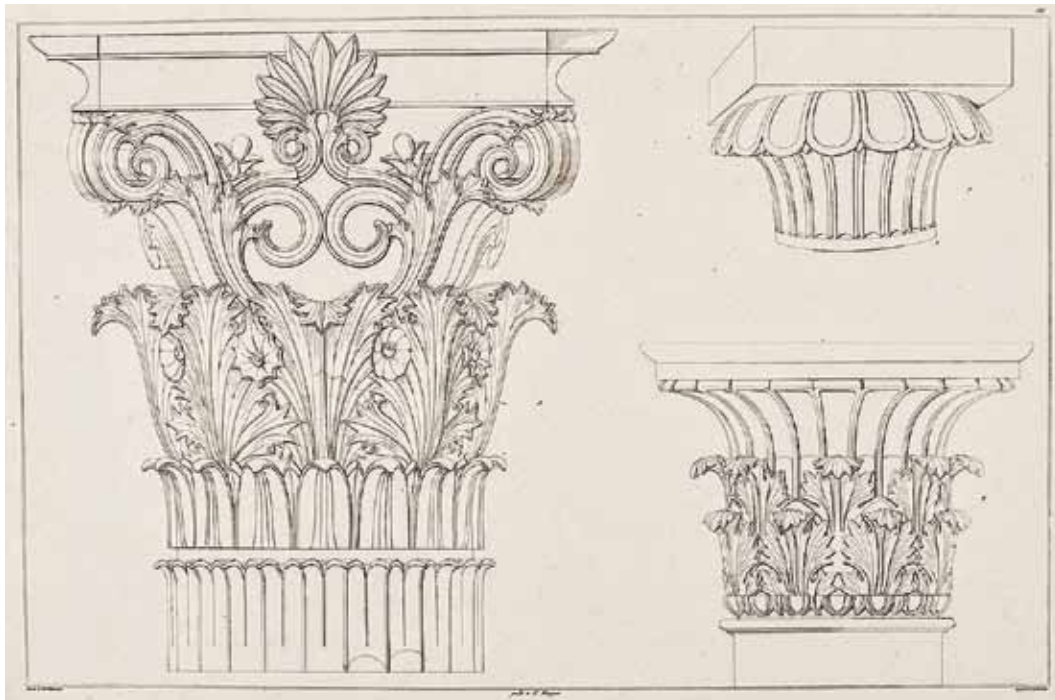
Historicism, as a starting point, a reference point, and eventually as an outdated period, was a constant presence in the life's work of Ödön Lechner. His complex relationship with Historicism is one of the keys to understanding his work, although the fundamental driving forces in his life were originality and innovation. It is therefore worth making a closer inspection of some of the questions relating to the topic, in particular at the start of his career.

Lechner began his studies at what was then Hungary's only technical institution of higher education, Buda Polytechnic, which was still in its infancy. The level of education there was so modest that in 1866, Lechner – together with two classmates, Gyula Pártos (Punczmann) and Alajos Hauszmann – was sent to study in Berlin by their teacher at the Polytechnic.

In the nineteenth century, the progressive German capital – in particular the Bauakademie (Academy of Architecture) – played an important role in training Hungarian architects, perhaps even surpassing the teaching establishments of Vienna in its importance to Hungarians.¹ In the post-Schinkel period, the Bauakademie had among its staff members such prominent architects and teachers as Friedrich Stüler, Johann Strack, Richard Lucae, Carl Bötticher and Friedrich Adler. From the 1850s, wave after wave of Hungarian students arrived in Berlin. The first was Antal Szkalnitzky, in 1857, who would later become an educator at the Polytechnic and one of Lechner's teachers. In the 1860s, in addition to Lechner and his two classmates, Emil Unger and Ferenc Kolbenheyer also made their way to Berlin. In the 1870s Géza Györgyi, Ignác Alpár (Stöckl) and Gyula Kolbenheyer studied in the German capital, and Flóris Korb and Kálmán Giergl followed them in the 1880s. Most of them went on to play key roles in Hungarian architecture. Looking back from the twentieth century perspective, Marcell Komor commented, "Berlin was

deemed to be an inexhaustible source of architectural wisdom".² This state of affairs was presumably also influenced by the fact that the German capital offered an alternative to the traditional cultural dominance of Vienna; in this sense, the orientation towards Berlin can be seen as an architectural expression of the ambitions of independence nursed by the Hungarian intelligentsia.

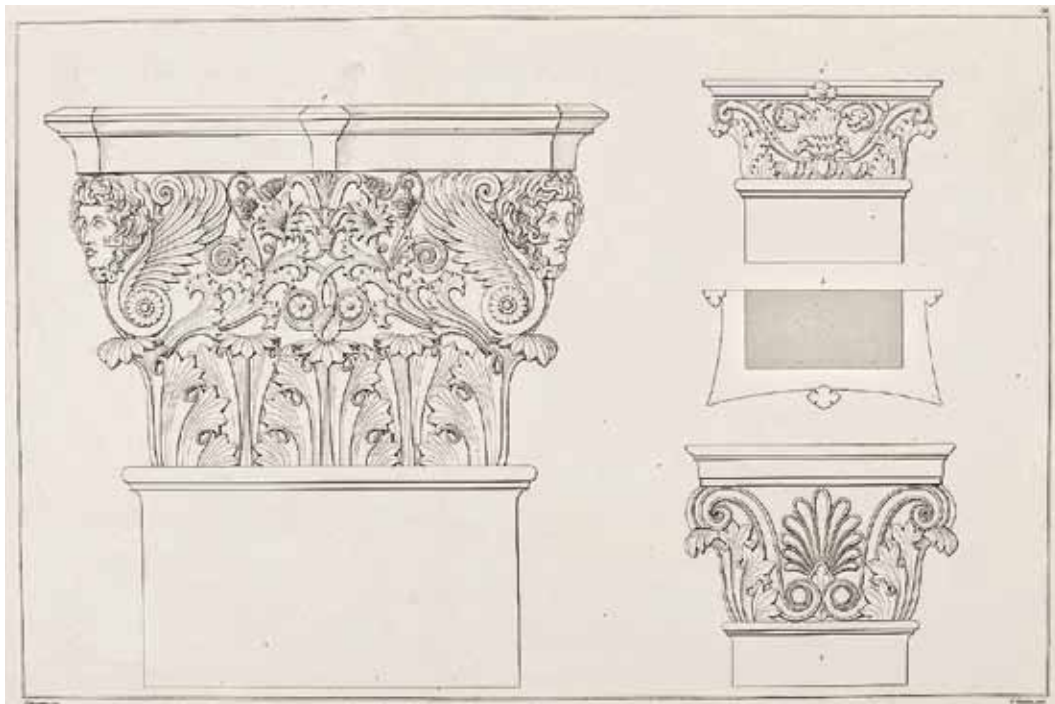
Among the teachers in Berlin who taught Hungarian students – including Lechner – Carl Bötticher (1806–1899) deserves particular attention. He joined the Bauakademie in 1839, initially teaching ornamental drawing (*Ornamentenzeichen*), followed from 1845 by linear and architectural drawing (*Linear- und Architekturzeichen*).³ He was one of his age's most notable theorists, and his work titled *Die Tektonik der Hellenen* (Potsdam, 1844–1852) exerted a huge influence on his contemporaries, and naturally on his students as well. Part of his theory was to differentiate between the architectural construction, or *Kernform* (core-form), and decoration, or *Kunstform* (art-form), with which he preceded the even more influential *Bekleidungstheorie* (theory of cladding) of Gottfried Semper.⁴ In the aforementioned work by Bötticher, and obviously in his teaching practice too, the defining element was its post-Schinkelian classicisation; it is well documented that the teaching of late neo-Classicism disappeared from the Bauakademie syllabus when Bötticher retired in 1876. However, there was a second thread to his work, which was a heightened interest in ornamentation, with a preference for floral elements. This duality manifested itself, among other areas, in the illustrations for *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*, which, despite its title, consisted mostly of drawings of ornaments. There are many illustrations of regular, classical forms, yet on other plates there are irregular combinations of classical motifs, more than once presented in an almost playful manner, sometimes even comprising human faces. Certain plates depict purely floral patterns. These illustrations



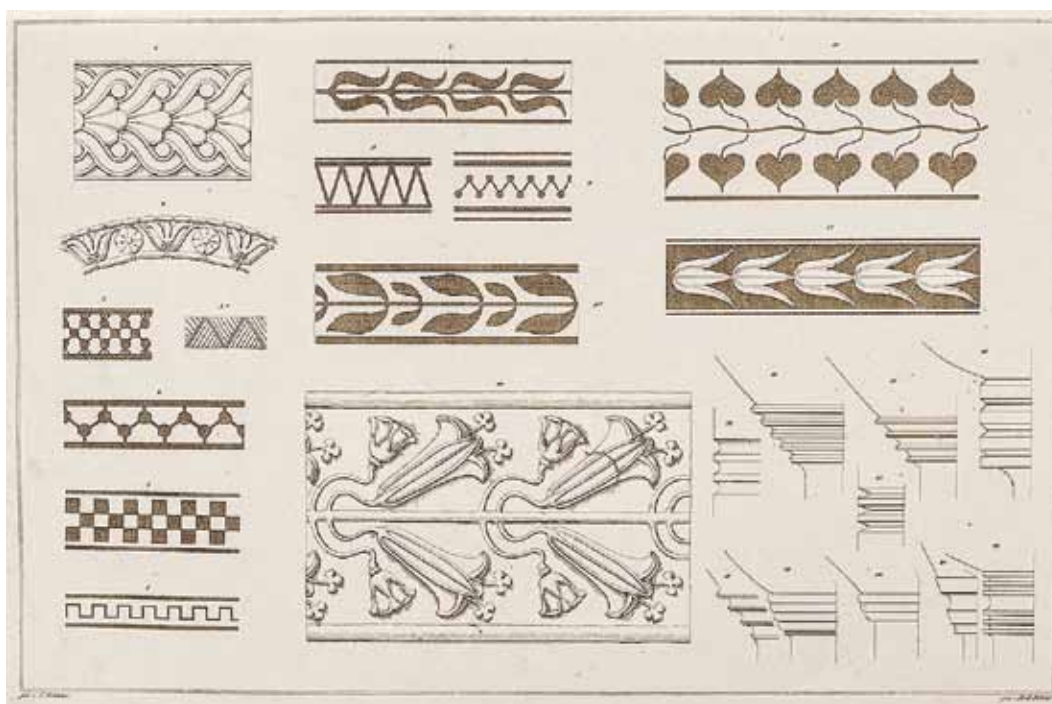
1. Carl Bötticher, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*, Potsdam, 1852, 42

were clearly familiar to his students and to members of the later generation, whose recollections of their lessons at the Bauakademie would have remained vivid throughout their careers. In 1906, on the centenary of his birth,

exponents of the German Secession, the Jugendstil, bowed their heads in memory of Bötticher, whom they regarded as one of the spiritual forefathers of their movement.⁵



2. Carl Bötticher, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*, Potsdam, 1852, 38



3. Carl Bötticher, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*, Potsdam, 1852, 6

Little is known about Lechner's student years in Berlin. None of the drawings or notes he made at the time have survived. In his *Autobiographical Outline*, published in 1911, four and a half decades later, he makes only brief mention of those days; he lists a few German schoolmates, but names no teachers. In summary, all he says is, "I naturally graduated from the academy as a follower of the 'classical' school".⁶ More is revealed about him in the memoirs of his classmate, Alajos Hauszmann: "In Berlin he diligently attended lectures, but produced little, and could not be induced into serious work. At home, however, he was always drawing, and even then he was admired for his great sense of decoration and his imagination. At the Bauakademie he attended Boetticher's [*sic*] classes on antiquity and professor Franz Adler's medieval classes. He practised design with Richard Lucae, and did structural studies with Carl Schwanlo. He participated in the watercolour course of professor Biermann, but he did not attend the nude drawing class in the evenings [...]."⁷

With his fondness for ornamentation, the young Lechner would obviously have gravitated towards Bötticher as the most interesting teacher, the one he could learn most from. We know for a fact that students had to make an in-depth study of Bötticher's drawings, in-

cluding the illustrations in *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*. Though there are no surviving drawn documents of this nature by Lechner, there are some by another Hungarian, Géza Györgyi, who studied in Berlin in the mid-1870s. Györgyi's legacy contains several drawings of this kind, made using a watercolour technique. One depicts the capital of an ancient column, bearing the inscription: "Bez.[zeichnet] Boetticher. W.[inter] S.[emester] 1873-74".⁸ The capital, with its unique decoration, precisely matches a capital on one of the plates in *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*.⁹ All that the Hungarian architecture student did was to colour in the given illustration meticulously, and to add shading to evoke spatial depth. The other student drawing made after an illustration in Bötticher's work depicts an ancient temple complex.¹⁰ Here Györgyi not only coloured in the antecedent, but also developed it: he turned what was originally an elevation into a perspective drawing, on top of which he reflected it along the lateral axis. According to the date written on the drawing, this more complicated task was completed in 1876, Györgyi's senior year. This indicates that students at the Bauakademie in Berlin had to deal closely with Bötticher's drawings all through their course. The situation must have been the same for Ödön Lechner, whose interest in ornamentation –

which he was clearly already drawn to – was deepened even further by the process of training described above. We are well aware of the importance of decoration in all of Lechner's works, and in the way his style evolved. In this respect, it is hard to overestimate the significance of his studies in Berlin and the influence exerted by Bötticher, even if, towards the end of his great career, Lechner no longer considered it worth mentioning. And it was not just ornamentation itself that had such an impact on the budding architect, but also its richness, while the emphasis on floral elements may have represented a starting point, or at least its affirmation. As such, in 1906, it is possible that even Lechner paused to remember Bötticher for a moment, though the Hungarian was later propelled forward by other, more powerful impulses.

studied in Berlin, and how he adapted them into something that was uniquely his own. His method and attitude reveal much about his later career.

Primayer House (1871–72), the apartment building he designed for his wife's family, where Lechner himself lived for several decades, is the strongest reflection of the Hellenistic architectural and decorative manner that he learnt in Berlin. Albeit less directly, the same style appeared on the apartment block he built for the city of Kecskemét (1871–74) and for the house at today's 3 Szent István tér, Budapest (1871–74). The architectural features, especially the mouldings and the capitals, are classically decorated, and include motifs like palmettes, acroteria and braiding. Lechner would have seen many such motifs in Bötticher's work. Somewhat unusually for Hungarian architecture at the time,



4. Ödön Lechner, 3 Szent István tér, Budapest, 1871–74, detail of façade

Upon his return to Hungary, Lechner (in partnership with Gyula Pártos) designed a number of residential properties in Pest in the first half of the 1870s. All he wrote about them in 1911 was, “I built a few houses in the Italian Renaissance style, which undeniably bore signs of the German school and a certain youthful exaggeration in their articulation.”¹¹ Nevertheless, they are worth examining to see how he used the forms he had

he used these motifs liberally and intensively. There were several young, Berlin-trained architects working in Hungary in those days, and the style of their buildings was often dubbed the “Berlin Renaissance” by their contemporaries.¹² Their works tended to be characterised by their pure elegance, and sometimes by their austere forms, rather than rich ornamentation. In addition to the customary shapes, Lechner also used



5. Ödön Lechner, Apartment Building of Kecskemét, Budapest, 1871–74, parapet decoration

different winding, tendril-like motifs, and plant and animal forms, which are not always easy to identify. Some of Lechner's buildings also featured figures of birds, which he would later make frequent use of, although

in the early years they were still quite realistic. The cast-iron balustrades on the first-floor windows of Primayer House, meanwhile, with their eccentric and lively combination of floral elements, are an embryon-



6. Ödön Lechner, Primayer House, Budapest, 1871–72, parapet decoration

ic forebear of the architect's later style, a playful suggestion of the human face. The fact that he designed every detail of his buildings himself, often including the furniture and fittings, is apparent not only from his unique style, although that could hardly be more evident. A later contemporary of his, Béla Málnai, spoke about Lechner's design methods: the process extended from conceiving the major forms down to working out the details, so that everything would come together as an organic whole.¹³ The surviving designs for his later buildings reveal that his attention would typically stretch to the tiniest of details, such as iron railings. In Lechner's buildings, iron railings are important decorative components, whose unique shape, with constituent parts often reworked into ever newer combinations, are a constant in his work. Among his early works, the stair-rails in Primayer House were a novel paraphrase of classical elements. Some similar details can be observed in Bötticher's book. In the other two buildings (the residential block at 3 Szent István tér and the apartment building of the city of Kecskemét), the balustrades along the staircases and the inner courtyards

railings, however, but also on the cast-iron pillars in the atrium of the house at 3 Szent István tér.

Lechner's longing for variety was an important part of his creative being. This can be seen not only in ornamentation, but also in the way he arranged the windows on the facade, where he paid equal attention to their horizontal and vertical distribution, their shape, and the way they were grouped together. His early works show this just as clearly as his later ones. Even in one of his very first works, the care home for elderly soldiers, the twin windows on each bay of the ground floor contrast strongly with the single, large windows upstairs. In the middle of the upstairs floor, Lechner placed a Palladian motif. In the case of Mándl House (1871–75), each bay of the ground floor has one window (or door), the next two floors have twin windows, and the top floor has a row of Palladian windows. Primayer House and the house at 3 Szent István tér also feature window variety. In the latter, the ground floor is relieved with arcade-like elements, which would also play an important role in Lechner's later career, stretching as far as his dramatic, ground-floor, open entranceways, such as the one on



7. Ödön Lechner, Apartment Building of Kecskemét, Budapest, 1871–74, railing of open gallery

were more closely related to one specific illustration in Bötticher's album.¹⁴ Lechner took the motif from there and turned it ninety degrees, adding a certain degree of variation. In the rails along the courtyard corridor of the apartment building of the city of Kecskemét, it is easy to make out the teasing, jocular human face, and the symbolic appearance of anthropomorphic-organic ideas. This motif of Bötticher's not only appears on the

the Museum of Applied Arts. The importance of Mándl House was also shown by the addition of sgraffito work on its facade. In using this technique, Lechner – who adored all forms of decoration on buildings – was following a new fashion in Europe, one of the first in Hungary to do so.

Lechner's early buildings also shared another characteristic, again only in an elementary form, that would

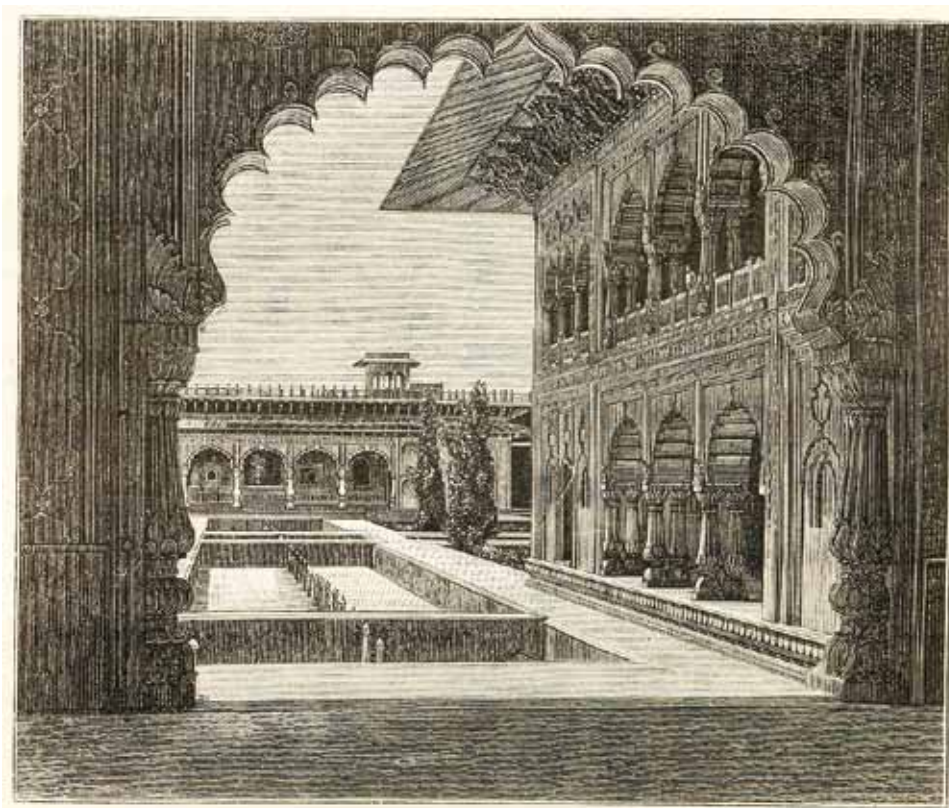
later grow into a dominant creative tendency. This was the way in which he rounded off space, and thought in three dimensions. This inclination can be seen in Lechner's preference for winding stairs and staircases, which would reach its full fruition in his later, more mature works, with the Museum of Applied Arts again serving as an example. Primayer House and Mándl House both include such features. The former was even given a skylight, which would also become one of the architect's favourite solutions.

Towards the end of his career, Lechner described his studies in Berlin in disparaging terms. He wrote, "In the midst of all my efforts and experiments [...] I had

the constant feeling that the German culture, which I had imbibed for three whole years, was mercilessly holding me captive, weighing me down, and suppressing every free artistic thought inside me."¹⁵ The buildings he made in the first half of the 1870s were, unsurprisingly, all stamped with what he had learnt in Berlin and with what was happening in architecture in Central Europe and Hungary. Yet his works were far from schematic. Quite the contrary. As we have seen, his decoration, his facade treatment, and his handling of mass and space all demonstrated great variety, and even a singular character. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that, within the frameworks available to him at the time,



8. Ödön Lechner, Mándl House, Budapest, 1871–75, István Rozinay, *Budapest építményei*, Budapest – Eperjes, 1883, 33



9. Central Pavilion in the palace at Deeg. From James Fergusson, *History of Indian Architecture* London, 1876, 483

Lechner pushed the boundaries as far as he could; this is particularly clear when we compare his buildings with the works his fellow Hungarian architects were making at the time. Nevertheless, many of the components that would flourish in his later works were, for the moment, only beginning to emerge.

After 1875, during the course of his work, Ödön Lechner came into contact with ever newer variations of Historicism, which had a profound impact on him, even as he tried to break free from them. Restrictions of space allow us only to refer to them briefly here. It is restoring chateaus in France, working under Clément Parent. It would be hard to exaggerate the influence that his French experiences had on his later career. Not only did his repertoire of forms expand immensely, there also opened up before him a new world of creativity with far greater freedom and flexibility. We will not go into further detail here about the French precedents and motifs contained in the works Lechner produced after his return to Hungary, as they are explored in an essay published by Karsten Falkenau in 1993.¹⁶ It

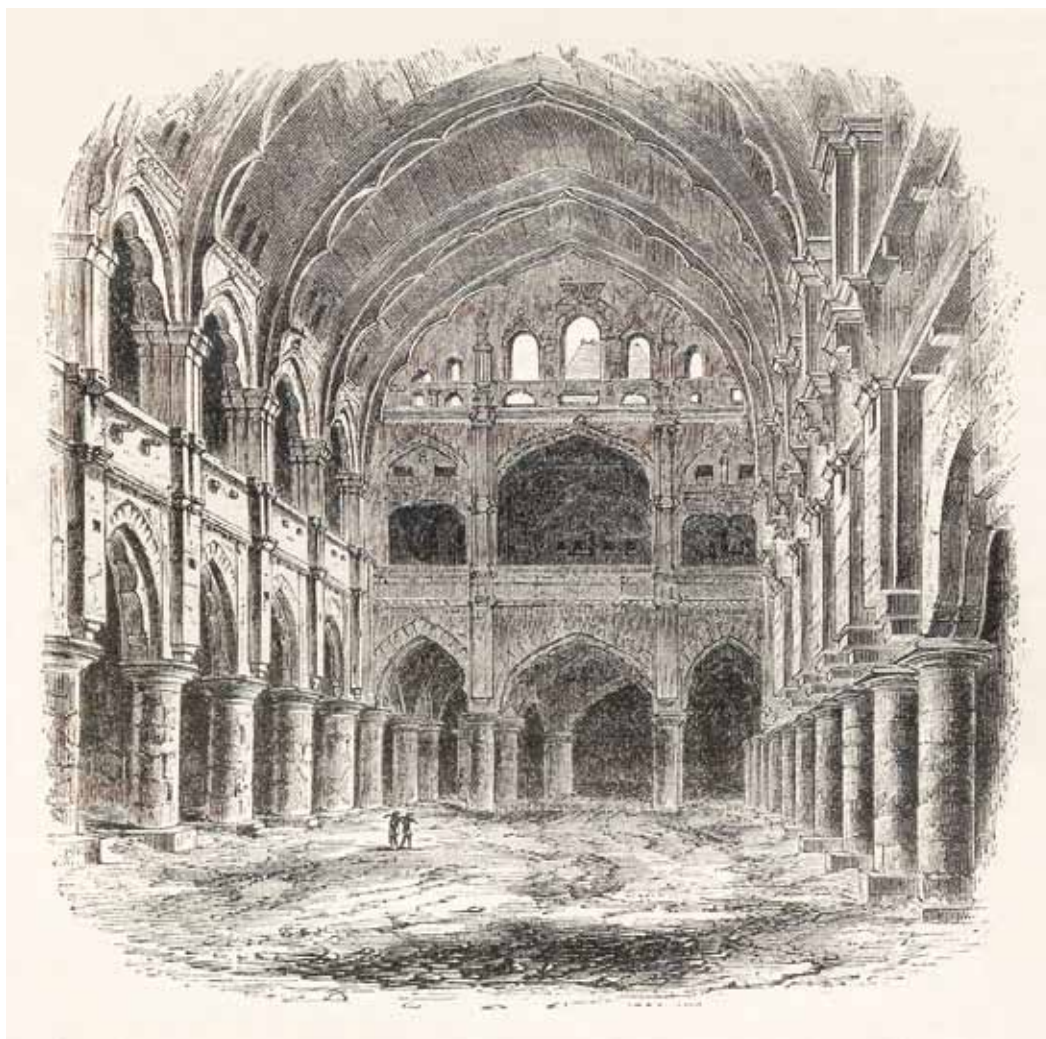
is, however, worth highlighting one general tendency, which was Lechner's use of bold, steep-angled roofs with complex profiles, in which he imitated some typical shapes from old French architecture. The apartment building on Andrassy út in Budapest which he designed for the Hungarian State Railways Pensions Institute (1883–84), his first major undertaking after his return from France, featured such a roof. For now, Lechner remained within the confines of Historicism, but in his later masterworks – Kecskemét City Hall, the Museum of Applied Arts, and the Postal Savings Bank – he breathed new life into steep roofs, finally giving them a starring role as the main bearer of artistic design and ideological meaning. In the 1880s he designed two large public buildings in a neo-Baroque style: Szeged City Hall (1882–83) and Nagybecskerek (today Zrenjanin, Serbia) County Hall (1885–86). Both provided ample opportunity for him to create unique forms. Kecskemét City Hall (1893–97), one of his *chefs d'œuvre* and the precursor to his Museum of Applied Arts (1893–96), is also fundamentally derived from Historicist elements; its

central architectural form, the gigantic central gable, was taken from German Renaissance architecture.

The Museum of Applied Arts itself is a brilliant symbiosis of historical and exotic components; we will not embark on a substantial analysis of this here. However, we should stress that the precedents for it that came from outside Europe were not just exotic, but also historical, in the sense that they were created in earlier centuries. In other words, they represented a journey across time as well as space. Among the influences were two of the key periods in Indian art: ancient Buddhist architecture and Mughal (or Mogul) architecture from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Buddhist temples of Ajanta, for instance, served as inspiration for the open entrance hall. Mughal architecture, meanwhile, was the source of the system of jagged curves in the museum's interior.¹⁷ In particular, we are referring

here to certain buildings of the Red Fort in Agra, the central pavilion of Deeg Palace, or even the hall of the Palace in Madurai, which inspired the forms of the grand exhibition hall in the Museum of Applied Arts not only in terms of its jagged curves, but also in its formation of space. Even the most modern of Lechner's masterpieces, the Postal Savings Bank (1900–01), has some Historicist traits. Whereas admirers of the progressive trend point out the smooth plane of the main facade, the central tower of the roof, which is the dominant element of the whole building, is in fact a paraphrase of a preferred roof form from French medieval and Renaissance architecture.

Historicism, then, was not only a starting point in Lechner's art, but also one of the potential resources that inspired wave after wave of innovations in his architecture.



10. Hall in Palace, Madurai, 17th century. From James Fergusson, *History of Indian Architecture*, London, 1876, 213

NOTES

¹ Sisa 2008.

² Marcell Komor, “Korb Flóris 70. születésnapjára.” [“On Flóris Korb’s 70th birthday.”] *A Magyar Mérnök és Építész Egylet Közlönye* [*Bulletin of the Hungarian Union of Engineers and Architects*] 8 June 1930 (quoted in Gerle 2010, 15.).

³ Börsch-Supan 1977, 556–557.

⁴ Mallgarve 1996, 219–222.

⁵ Börsch-Supan 1977, 557.

⁶ Lechner 1911, 343.

⁷ Hadik 1985, 32.

⁸ Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management – Hungarian Museum of Architecture: 69.026.35.

⁹ Bötticher 1852, plate 4.

¹⁰ Bötticher 1852, plate 41, and Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management – Hungarian Museum of Architecture: 69.026.40.

¹¹ Lechner 1911, 343.

¹² Sisa 2008.

¹³ Málnai 1908, 7.

¹⁴ Bötticher 1852, plate 12.

¹⁵ Lechner 1911, 344.

¹⁶ Falkenau 1993.

¹⁷ For the Oriental forerunners of the Museum of Applied Arts, and the role played by nineteenth-century publications, especially the English-language handbook (Fergusson 1876), including illustrations taken from it, see Sisa 2014, 19–21.

Bibliography and General Abbreviations

General Abbreviations

BFL =	Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár (Budapest City Archives)
MNL–OL =	Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár – Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives, Budapest)
MNW =	Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie (National Museum, Warsaw)
MOB =	Műemlékek Országos Bizottsága (National Committee of Historic Monuments, 1881–1949)
OMF =	Országos Műemléki Felügyelőség (National Monument Protection Agency, Hungary, 1957–1992)
ZÖIV =	Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architekten-Vereins

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'Die Moderne in der Architektur und im Kunstgewerbe,' *Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architekten-Vereins* 1899, no. 10, 145–151; no. 11, 161–168; no.12, 184–189. <http://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-btu/frontdoor/index/index/docId/1804> (last accessed: 2014.12.15.).

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HÁMORI, PÉTER: Keszérü figs. 4, 10, 13, 16, 19–20; Sármány figs. 1, 8; Szántó fig. 10; Sisa figs. 4–7; Kerékgyártó fig. 8

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